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ABSTRACT

In the most basic terms, the skills and attributes that produced success for the first two generations of community college leaders will be the skills and attributes required of those leading community colleges into the new millennium. The issues and the goals to be attained, however, will be somewhat different. This paper looks at the leadership traits, skills, and attributes necessary for effective leadership in the 21st century, and the strategies needed to prepare leaders for their emerging roles. It presents an incomplete list of traits that have been found in effective community college leaders, which can be learned and developed: vision; integrity; confidence; courage; technical knowledge; the ability to form partnerships; persistence; good judgment; and the desire to lead. The desired purpose of this list is to ensure that there is opportunity for learning and development. This paper also discusses some of the challenges and opportunities facing community college leaders in the new millennium: relevance in the global economy; new competition and the move toward privatization; distance education; competency-based programs; blurred mission boundaries; and new funding challenges. National, state, and local community college organizations should undertake efforts to identify, train, and mentor prospective leaders for community colleges in the coming millennium. (VWC)

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Charting the Second Century of Community Colleges
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LEADERSHIP

Issues Paper No. 8

Community College Leadership in the New Millennium

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In the most basic terms, the skills and attributes that produced success for the first two generations of community college leaders will be the skills and attributes required of those leading community colleges into the new millennium. The issues and the goals to be attained, however, will be somewhat different. This paper looks at the leadership traits, skills, and attributes necessary for effective leadership in the 21st century, and the strategies needed to prepare leaders for their emerging roles.

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INTRODUCTION

ommunity college leadership should seek to preserve the traits and skills that have already served to create, nurture, and place community colleges in a strategic position for further prominence in higher education in the United States. The issues that upcoming community college leaders will have to address will be different and more complex than those faced by community college leaders in the past. Therefore, institutions such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), university leadership programs, state and local boards of trustees, and presidents associations must be prepared to assist in the preparation of leaders. National, state, and local community college organizations should take to identify, train, and mentor prospective leaders for community colleges in the coming millennium.

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Leadership

Leadership is an art, not a science; it is more persuasion than precision. According to John Gardner (1988), there does not exist an exact study of leadership, and that is probably so. Leadership has been defined in a number of different ways, none of which does more than provide one aspect of this complex subject. Max DePree (1989) says "Leadership is liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible." John Gardner (1988) suggests that "Leadership is bringing people and goals together in a common cause." Stephen Covey (1989) takes a slightly different approach when he states that "The basic task of leadership is to increase the standard of living and the quality of life for all stakeholders." Of the more than 125 definitions of leadership to be found in a literature search, few of them conflict with the basic position that leadership is simply holding the goals of the institution in one hand and the people of the institution in the other and somehow bringing these two together in a common good.

Traits of Effective Community College Leaders

There is no typical leader. Leaders come in all sizes and shapes. Some are striking in appearance and exude personality and charisma, whereas others appear quite ordinary. There are, however, certain traits that are found in effective community college leaders. The following list is incomplete but will serve to illustrate the point that effective leaders have certain traits and that most of these can be learned and developed. The desired purpose here is to ensure that there is opportunity for learning and development.

Vision

First and foremost, a leader must have a vivid sense of what the college should look like and where it is going in the near and intermediate future. The leader studies the factors that are shaping the future and the likely effects these factors will have on how the institution best fulfills its mission. Changing forces in society and in the economy, and the changes being brought about by technology, will be viewed in terms of the opportunities they present. Visionary leaders welcome these changes and seek to position the college to take advantages of the new programs and services that are available to serve the community. A fine line exists between seeing how things will be and how things can be. Vision relates more closely to the latter.

Without vision, the leader is merely an administrator taking care of the daily chores, a pattern that provides no direction, meaning the college will continue to operate as it has in the past. Staying true to the mission in that context will be seen as continuing to offer the same programs and services that were established when the college was founded. Change will be seen as a threat to be avoided or delayed as long as possible. Little by little the college will lose its relevance to the changing needs of the people it is to serve and will come to failure in its mission.

Integrity

Much has been said recently about what is viewed as the declining ethical standards and morality of public leaders. No matter how one views this issue, no community college leader can long remain effective if his or her basic integrity is in doubt. To be a leader, one must have followers. To follow, one has to believe that the leader is reliable, will work to the best of his or her ability for the organization, and will not abandon it or the followers at a critical time. As followers, people place their fortunes and future in the hands of the leader. They are taking a risk in the effectiveness of the leader. People cannot maintain the necessary confidence when they doubt their leader's reliability and moral fitness. A point of utmost importance here is the plea that relevant organizations provide courses and programs in ethical leadership for emerging and existing community college leaders.

Confidence

An effective leader must have and exude confidence that the directions in which he or she is leading the organization will serve it well. The confidence we describe is based on careful planning that leads to a desired outcome. To be certain, a leader facing uncertain times with scant resources will often have moments of self-doubt and uncertainty, but it does not serve the leader or the col-

lege well to display this uncertainty publicly. No one can know that he or she is always right. Indeed, one cannot always be right in every decision. Nor is it expected. Confidence does not mean public omnipotence or cocky self-assurance but should be based on the knowledge that one has considered the alternatives, sought and received counsel from well-informed associates, and taken a direction based on sound reasoning. When setbacks occur, as they will, the effective leader will make the appropriate course corrections and move forward.

Courage

Confidence and courage are highly related in the context of community college leadership. Confidence comes from practice and study. Courage is greatly enhanced when confidence is prevalent. When the direction of the leader is derailed by fear or doubt, followers within and outside the organization will be reluctant to take the indicated path. It takes confidence and courage to engage in the ongoing reinterpretation of the community college mission required to successfully lead community colleges through the hazards inherent in such dynamic times as the coming years are certain to be.

When others oppose the leader's ideas, it takes humility to consider that others may be right. It takes courage to evaluate the objections and take the appropriate course of action. If the objections are well founded, one needs to change course even if it may be perceived by some as a sign of weakness. If the objections are not well founded, one needs the courage to respectfully acknowledge the objections and to move forward despite them.

Technical Knowledge

Effective community college leaders must know what the business of a community college should be. This knowledge requires serious study and experience in the field. Although some excellent community college leaders have emerged from both business and politics, a person will not necessarily provide effective leadership in the community college field simply by applying the knowledge and skills learned in those contexts. To be successful, a person coming from another field needs to carefully consider the mission and culture of the community college before applying the techniques or conclusions from those fields to community college leadership.

Increasingly, effective leaders must have a working knowledge of communication and educational technology and a clear understanding of how these technologies can be applied to achieving the community college mission. The community college leader must be able to assess the educational, economic, political, and social implications of emerging technological alternatives. This cannot be done without developing a sound understanding of the technology and its likely direction for at least the next several years.

Collaborators

There may have been a time when a community college, or a community college leader, could successfully operate in isolation. If there was such a time, it is gone and will not return. Successful community colleges will find themselves in a host of partnerships. They will be developing occupational programs for the benefit of, and with the assistance of, particular industries. They will be partnering with secondary schools in the development of dual enrollment and advanced placement programs to enrich the high school experience and accelerate the student's progress through college. They will be working with other community groups and organizations to identify and respond to community needs. They will be partnering with other higher education institutions to jointly provide programs and services that neither institution could economically offer alone. For the college to develop partnerships, the community college leader will deliberately and systematically develop relationships with the leaders of these other organizations.

Similarly, the community college leader will develop a collaborative climate within the organization. Old program and departmental lines will need to be blurred and old ways of gaining internal consensus will need to be developed and strengthened. Stephen Covey (1989) says it well when he states:

> The relationship of the parts is also the power in creating a synergistic culture inside a family or an organization. The more genuine

> the involvement, the more sincere and sustained the participation in analyzing and solving problems, the greater the release of everyone's creativity, and of their commitment to what they create.

The closer the college comes to creating the type of internal synergistic culture Covey advocates, the better the results will be for the community and the college. This may be one of the determining factors for the future success or failure of a community college in the coming decades.

Persistence

Persistence is largely derived from vision. With a clear vision of what the college can and should be in the years ahead, it is easier to persist. Without such a vision, it is hard to continue to press on despite obstacles and setbacks. Without persistence, however, it is unlikely that much of value will be accomplished.

Good Judgment

Much of what passes for good luck in the life of a leader is the product of good judgment. Good judgment is the result of understanding the social, political, interpersonal, and financial forces at work in the community and being able to accurately predict the reaction of individuals and groups to certain actions. With this knowledge, the leader assesses the likely gain and cost of a course of action, and if the cost outweighs the gain, elects another less costly path. This is a skill that comes much easier to some than to others, yet it is a skill that can be learned. Courage, for example, may become foolhardy and weaken as a desired trait if it is not associated with good judgment.

Desire to Lead

Not everyone wants to be a leader. Many are content to do their job and let others take responsibility for the course of the institutions. There is a great need for good workers who simply do their job competently. Many are dedicated teachers and counselors focused on the welfare of the students before them. Others want to make their mark on the future of community colleges and should be encouraged to do so.

Changing Opportunities

The community college mission as it appears in a number of textbooks is the product of a deliberate process whereby the leaders of the new community college movement examined the needs of communities across the country and arrived at a fairly common consensus regarding the work of these new institutions. The degree of consensus testified to how well the leaders did their job. The fundamental mission remains valid today: to serve the higher education and workforce training needs of the community in which they were placed, and to provide for the development and enrichment of the individuals in that community. There are, however, fundamental changes in the educational and workforce training needs of the communities, and the means of providing educational programs and services have changed dramatically.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when community colleges were expanding at the rate of 50 or so a year, American society was faced with two major challenges:

1. The baby boom generation was approaching college age and most states were woefully short of capacity in the then-existing colleges and universities. It was less expensive to build capacity at local institutions, most of which were designed for commuting students, than to build the same capacity at residential colleges and universities.
2. The foundation of the economy in many states was moving from an agrarian base to an industrial base. There was an urgent need to provide industry with workers trained in the trades and crafts associated with the industry. Former agricultural workers required more specific skills to augment the general skills they had gained on the farm.

Now, the "baby boom echo" generation is approaching college age and again in many states, there is concern that the capacity of the higher education establishment may not be sufficient. The economy is rapidly moving from an industrial base to an information and service base, and the pace of change continues to accelerate. The old way of meeting needs by developing new facilities and programs will no longer serve. Some of the challenges and opportunities facing community college leaders in the new millennium are discussed in the following text.

Relevance in a Global Economy

In the early days of community colleges, most colleges were sharply focused on their home districts. The idea that community colleges would need to be engaged in international activities was not generally accepted. International activities were discouraged or even forbidden in some states. The international programs offered were often seen as frivolous or exotic programs for the affluent and therefore somewhat suspect for a community college.

Only in the past decade has it become apparent that community college graduates need to be prepared to participate and compete in a global economy. This has produced a number of bilateral or multilateral international partnerships between community colleges and educational institutions in foreign countries. The present level of international activity is, however, quite small compared with what will likely be needed in the first decade of the new millennium when virtually every community college will need to be involved at some level in one or more international arrangements.

New Competition and the Move toward Privatization

The number and variety of providers of instruction will dramatically increase. In addition to regular classroom instruction, students will be able to receive instruction from a number of colleges, public and private, and from commercial providers in their homes by means of cable television (course on demand) or computer. Computerized instruction will include several options, including the World Wide Web and CD-ROM, which will have greatly increased capacity, and a variety of mixed-media options (Puyear 1997).

Distance Education

Interactive instructional television (IITV) will remain an essential tool for extending the classroom, particularly in the rural districts and in the large rural areas of the metropolitan districts. As a vehicle for reaching special populations and individual learners, however, it will have been largely replaced by the variety of nonsynchronous instructional offerings as described previously.

Competency-Based Programs

While community colleges will increasingly become providers of distance education, the greater impact will often be on the community college role as the integrator of learning and coursework received through distance education and workplace learning. Community college programs and courses will be defined in terms of what the student will know or be able to do upon completion of the work, rather than on the length of the instructional program. Particularly in occupational areas, the standard course length will be reduced to sharply focused modules that can be presented to workers on the job. When the standard course is still used, it will increasingly be defined in terms of the competency modules that make it up.

Mission Boundaries Blurred

Community colleges will become the connector and integrator that make the high school-to-college transition a smooth and gradual process. Community colleges will reach down to the high schools to provide college courses that simultaneously count toward high school graduation requirements. These dual enrollment courses will allow students in even small high schools to enrich the last year or two of high school with challenging coursework and, at the same time, accelerate their collegiate career. Because of the rebounding baby boom echo population, community colleges will again be called upon to provide an increasing share of lower division instruction in many states.

Community college-to-university transfer articulation will become more important. State legislatures will be inclined to step in when the community colleges and public universities cannot develop satisfactory transfer systems on their own. Computerized and Web-based tools will be developed to assist students in planning their transfer programs. (Puyear 1997).[1]

The number and variety of partnerships in which community colleges participate will further blur mission boundaries. Community college collaboration with public universities will have increased to the point where it will

[1] Arizona's community colleges and universities have developed such a plan that was implemented beginning January 1999. Information on this plan can be found on the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona Web site: www.stbd.cc.az.us.

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be possible to earn a moderately broad array of baccalaureate degrees at most community colleges not located in the same community as a university. This collaboration v ill take various forms, but in each case, the baccalaureate degree will be awarded by the university, whereas a significant part of the instruction will be provided by faculty who also teach at the community college. Similarly, community colleges will have developed partnerships with industries and industry groups to provide preservice and in-service workforce development specifically tailored to major employers in the service region.

New Funding Challenges

The basis for state support for community colleges will shift from an enrollment-driven paradigm to a model that includes a major component based on the accomplishment of predefined priorities and the contribution of community college to the economic and social health of the state. Full-time equivalent enrollment models will be supplemented by such criteria as the number of occupational students placed and retained in employment related to the program of instruction and the number of transfer students who transfer to a four-year college or university and are retained in that college or university for at least one full year. Colleges will become more entrepreneurial in the selection and presentation of programs. Tuition and fees will be affected by market forces and will vary among the offerings of each college. The development of funding criteria and the development of entrepreneurial strategies will be a major challenge for community college leaders in the first decade of the new millennium.

Conclusion

The future goals of community colleges will change to some degree, but the leadership traits and skills that have served well in the past will serve well in the future. The continued development of such traits and skills among evolving leaders is essential and can be accomplished by continuing and expanding much of what has been done in the past.

AACC for many years has sponsored a number of opportunities for leadership development for new and emerging leaders. The Presidents Academy, the workshops for leadership development among the organizations of the association, the development of papers, monographs, and books on leadership, and the efficient manner of communication on issues of importance among the constituent colleges have all contributed to the development of leaders.

Studies, both empirical and formal, indicate that retirement and turnover among America's community college leadership in the near future will have a serious impact. As many as 600 of the slightly more than 1,200 community college presidents in the United States could retire during the next decade. That is a new issue for community colleges. As the parent organization, AACC must play a major role in addressing this issue. Partnerships between and among the association and several major universities are

routes worth considering. Current programs of the association should be continued and expanded. There is much expertise among current community college leaders that should be used in these institutes.

ACCT is devoted to the advancement of leadership among its membership. But board members are also interested in the issue of presidential leadership. It is generally understood that the one vital responsibility of the board is the hiring of a president. In this case, ACCT will be interested in both the quantity and quality of leadership development for the next millennium. We suggest that the ACCT consider being a partner with the AACC in initiatives to address the needs expressed in this paper.

State community college boards must play a role in the preparation of future community college leaders. These boards also have major interests in the traits and skills of future leaders. While some boards, such as the North Carolina board, are moving forward with funding ventures in this area, most state boards are not. The capabilities to train future leaders are plentiful in most states and should be used.

Some of the best leadership development for community college leaders takes place within individual community colleges. In colleges where presidents and trustees believe that upward mobility of employees is a responsibility of the institution, emerging leaders are a valued asset. These colleges expect that those with leadership abilities will be encouraged to step forward to perpetuate and expand a mission that addresses recognized needs and flexes to address evolving needs of people in the community. In these colleges, presidents know there is a difference between building colleges and inheriting them. They are willing to spend the time and effort to ensure that good leadership will continue.

Although leadership traits and skills will remain about the same over the next decade, differences will come in the changing of some goals. The globalization of higher education will force community colleges to think in a broader manner. Mission focus, such as workforce preparation, will be dramatically different. Most of the traits and skills of leadership may be the same, but they will be applied to evolving goals.

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AACC ACCT

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